

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1475

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, March 15, 2007

Title: An act relating to the state board for volunteer firefighters and reserve officers.

Brief Description: Adding members to the state board for volunteer firefighters and reserve officers.

Sponsors: Representatives Hurst, Haigh, Eickmeyer, Curtis, Alexander, Morrell, Crouse, Simpson, Roach and VanDeWege.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/23/07, 94-0.

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 3/15/07 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Kline, Pridemore and Swecker.

Staff: Amy Van Horn (786-7784)

Background: The Volunteer Fire Fighters' and Reserve Officers' Relief and Pension System (System) provides death, disability, medical, and retirement benefits to volunteer fire fighters and reserve officers in cities, towns, and fire protection districts. The System is funded by member and employer contributions and a portion of the fire insurance premium tax. Employers are required to participate in the death, disability, and medical benefit plans offered by the System, but participation in the pension component is optional. About 18,000 members are covered by the death, disability, and medical benefits, and about 12,000 members are covered by the pension benefits.

The State Board for Volunteer Fire Fighters and Reserve Officers (Board) administers the System. The Board consists of three members of fire departments covered by the System, who are appointed by the Governor to serve overlapping six-year terms. The members must be from different congressional districts.

Summary of Bill: Two members are added to the Board, for a total of five members. No more than two members of the Board may be receiving relief or retirement pension payments under the System. The Governor may consider recommendations from appropriate state associations when making appointments to the Board.

Appropriation: None.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill is not new, and we're hoping it will pass this year. We have over 18,000 volunteer firefighters in the state, and they are the people who get out of bed in the middle of the night, leave dinner, do whatever it takes, to go out and help save someone's life. This is very important to the volunteers and they have wanted it for a long time. It is particularly important that more Board members are active volunteers. There is no opposition to the bill, and it passed out of its House committee unanimously. This is the least we can do to show our volunteers that we value what they do and are grateful for their service and sacrifice.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Hurst, prime sponsor; T.J. Nedrow, President, Washington State Firefighters Association.